

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 2, 9-12, and 18 will have been amended. Additionally, claims 19 and 20 will have been submitted for consideration by the Examiner.

In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding rejections together with an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending herein, in due course. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner objected to claims 10 and 18 because of a number of enumerated informalities. By the present Response, Applicant has amended these claims to eliminate the noted informalities. Additionally, Applicant has eliminated similar informalities from other claims. Applicant respectfully thanks the Examiner for bringing these informalities to his attention so that they could be eliminated.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 6-12 and 16-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as unpatentable over AZEGAMI (U.S. Patent No. 6,437,924). Applicant respectfully traverses the above rejection and submits that it is inappropriate.

Applicant's invention is directed to a light shielding structure of a lens barrel that includes an inner ring and an outer ring positioned outside the inner ring so that at least one of the inner ring and the outer ring rotates relative to another. The inner ring and the outer ring are configured to move along an optical axis of the lens barrel without relative axial motion therebetween. Further, the inner ring includes at least one cutout

portion which radially extends through the inner ring. The light shielding structure includes an inner flange wall provided with the inner ring and positioned at a front end surface of the inner ring, a first annular groove provided on a rear facing surface of the inner flange wall with the first annular groove being centered about the optical axis and a second annular groove provided on an inner peripheral surface of the outer ring. A light shield ring includes a cylindrical portion centered about the optical axis and an outer flange portion which extends radially outwards from a rear end of the cylindrical portion so that the cylindrical portion extends into the first annular groove to be slidably moveable relative thereto and so that the outer flange portion extends into the second annular groove to be slidably moveable relatively thereto.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of features defining the embodiments of the present invention, as set forth above, are not taught, disclosed nor rendered obvious by AZEGAMI.

In particular, according to the Examiner's explanation of the disclosure of AZEGAMI, the inner ring corresponds to cam ring 40 of AZEGAMI while the outer ring corresponds to the stationary ring 10. However, Applicant's claims explicitly recites that the inner and outer rings are configured to move along an optical axis without relative axial motion therebetween. It is respectfully submitted that this is not true of the corresponding features as identified by the Examiner. In particular, the stationary ring 10 of AZEGAMI does not move along the optical axis while the cam ring 40 moves along the optical axis. In this regard, the Examiner's attention is respectfully directed to column 3, line 35 of AZEGAMI and column 5, lines 45-47 of AZEGAMI. Accordingly, there is clearly relative motion between the cam ring 40 and the stationary ring 10 and

accordingly, these elements of AZEGAMI do not correspond to the inner and outer rings recited in Applicant's claim.

For this reason alone, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's claims are clearly patentable over the AZEGAMI reference.

Additionally, Applicant's claim recites an inner flange wall provided with the inner ring and positioned at a front end surface of the inner ring. This feature is also not disclosed in the AZEGAMI reference. In particular, in setting forth the rejection, the Examiner asserted that the inner flange wall corresponds to the engagement pin 42. However, it is clear that the engagement pin 42 is not positioned at a front end surface of the inner ring.

Nor has the Examiner defined a first annular groove provided in a rear facing surface of the inner flange wall. It is respectfully submitted that there is no annular groove provided in the element that the Examiner has identified as comprising the inner flange wall. In particular, the engagement pin 42 does not have an annular groove.

Accordingly, for each of the above reasons independently and certainly for all of the above-noted reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of features recited in each of Applicant's independent claims is not taught, disclosed nor rendered obvious by the AZEGAMI reference relied upon by the Examiner.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 3-5 and 13-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over AZEGAMI in view of SHINTANI (Japanese JP 2001-215381). Applicant respectfully traverses the above rejection and submits that it is inappropriate with respect to the combination of features recited in these claims. In this regard, Applicant notes that contrary to the Examiner's assertion, SHINTANI does

not teach the use of synthetic resin material to create a photographic lens barrel as would be required in view of the Examiner's interpretation of AZEGAMI element 30 as comprising Applicant's light shield ring. There is absolutely no teaching whatsoever of fabricating a linear movement ring of a resilient synthetic material. Such a fabrication would impede operability as the ring would deform and would not be available to accurately guide movement of the appropriate elements.

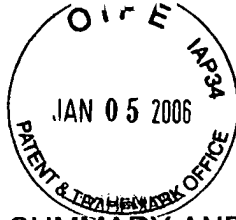
Moreover, SHINTANI does not overcome the above-noted deficiencies of the primary reference AZEGAMI and accordingly, cannot, even if properly combined with AZEGAMI, render unpatentable any of the claims in the present application.

By the present Response, Applicant has submitted two additional claims and submits that these claims are patentable over the references of record in the present application based on their own recitations as well as based upon the recitations of the independent claim from which they depend, at least for the reasons set forth above. In particular, claims 19 and 20 define the outer flange portion of the light shielding ring as comprising a complete circle. It is clear that the element 30 of AZEGAMI is not a complete circle as clearly shown in Figs. 7 and 8. For this additional reason, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of Applicant's invention are clearly patentable over any proper combination of the references applied thereagainst.

Applicant further submits that the Examiner has set forth no proper motivation for combining the references in the manner to render the claims of the present application unpatentable. In this regard, the Examiner has not provided a motivation why one of ordinary skill in the art would use a resilient lens barrel or any of the other recited features without reference to Applicant's disclosure.

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Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests consideration of the newly submitted claims, reconsideration of each of the outstanding rejections, and an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicant has made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believes that he has now done so. Applicant has amended the independent claims to even more clearly define features of Applicant's invention. Applicant has further discussed the disclosure of the references and has pointed out the shortcomings thereof with respect to the claimed features of Applicant's invention. Applicant has discussed the recitations of Applicant's claims and has noted the deficiencies of the references with respect thereto. Accordingly, Applicant has provided a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application and respectfully requests an indication to such effect in due course.

The amendments to the claims made in this amendment have not been made to overcome the prior art, and thus, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
Hitoshi TANAKA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce H. Bernstein", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce H. Bernstein  
Reg. No. 29,027

William Pieprz  
Reg. No. 33,630

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GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.  
1950 Roland Clarke Place  
Reston, VA 20191  
(703) 716-1191